

New Windsor, NY - U.S. Representative John Hall (NY-19) welcomed U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood to Stewart International Airport today to discuss the critical importance of Stewart Airport to the nation's transportation needs. Officials from the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, state and local officials, and local business leaders were also on hand. Rep. Hall is a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and its Subcommittee on Aviation.

Following a tour of the airport, participants met for a roundtable discussion on Stewart International's future as the major economic and transportation hub of the Hudson Valley. Topics discussed included economic development of the area surrounding the airport, attracting international charter flights, increasing cargo flights, and constructing a link to the Metro-North Railroad Port Jervis Line.

In an effort to attract international charter flights to Stewart, the Port Authority intends to apply to the U.S. Department of Transportation for funds needed to install the necessary infrastructure to process baggage from international flights, and to perform U.S. Customs inspections. The cost of the infrastructure required by the Federal Inspections Services is approximately \$250,000. Part of the purpose of Secretary LaHood's visit today was to get a first-hand look at Stewart and its capabilities as a hub for international flights. Port Authority officials expect to submit a completed application to DOT in the near future.

Congressman Hall said, "I'm very pleased that Secretary LaHood took the time to come and see Stewart. Those of us in the Hudson Valley know that it has the potential to become a truly world-class airport, and a major cargo and passenger transportation center. With Secretary LaHood's visit, we are one step closer to realizing that potential."

"Today I had the opportunity to hear from officials and local transportation leaders about the economic benefits and congestion relief that Stewart airport provides to the region," said Secretary LaHood. "Thanks to national leadership from Congressman Hall, developments for Stewart airport are within reach, and I look forward to working together to improve transportation for upstate New York."

Susan M. Baer, Port Authority Director of Aviation, said, "We appreciate the opportunity to host a visit by Secretary LaHood and Congressman Hall, who share our vision for Stewart Airport's enormous potential as an economic engine for the mid-Hudson Valley that can serve the business and leisure travel needs of the region."

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